

Governor's Council on Behavioral Health Services to Children's Subcommittee

Committee Report November 2003

Background:

The Services to Children Subcommittee was formed in response to a facilitated strategic planning process undertaken by the Governor's Council in Fall 2002. Based on the priorities identified by Governor's Council members, three subcommittees were formed including the Services to Children Subcommittee. Governor's Council Chair, Richard Leclerc appointed Cynthia Barry, Chair and Noreen Mattis, Co-chair. Membership on the subcommittee is voluntary and consists of representatives of both the public and private sector. A complete listing of committee members and meeting attendees is attached.

Committee Charge:

The committee charge was to review the Report of the Rhode Island System of Care Task Force *Toward An Organized System of Care for Rhode Island's Children, Youth and Families* and offer critique, support, or advocacy regarding the report's recommendations with the goal of developing a report to the Governor.

Committee Action:

The first meeting of the Services to Children Subcommittee was held in February 2003. To date, the group has met six times: February 26, March 26, April 28, June 10, and July 1, 2003.

Committee Recommendations:

The committee recognizes the scope and complexity of the myriad of issues inherent in the development of a system of care to effectively respond to the behavioral health needs of children and adolescents. We also recognize the obstacles presented by the present economic climate and the competing demands on limited financial resources. It will take the cooperation and collaboration of both the public and private sectors in partnership with families and communities to create a system of care that can begin to meet the needs of Rhode Island's children and adolescents. This effort will demand a commitment of the time, talent, wisdom, and dedication of all those involved.

The committee also recognizes that several documents have been published that extensively dissect and analyze the Report of the Rhode Island System of Care Task Force. We have determined that it is not the best use of our time and energies to create another such document. We have chosen instead to focus on the following issues relative to the implementation of the system of care and propose that these recommendations be the future course of the committee's work.

- I. The Services to Children Subcommittee recommends that the committee be established as a permanent standing committee of the Governor's Council on Behavioral Health. The role of the Services to Children Subcommittee will be two-fold:
 1. To inform the Council on issues related to children's behavioral health and
 2. To provide advocacy for the behavioral health care needs of children and their families
- II. The subcommittee whole-heartedly endorses the core values outlined in *Toward An Organized System of Care for Rhode Island Children, Youth and Families* that services to children and adolescents need to be:
 - a. Family-centered and community-based
 - b. Culturally competent
 - c. Promoting best practices and evidence-based
- III. A system of care to meet the behavioral health needs of Rhode Island's children and adolescents must address a continuum of care including prevention, service delivery/treatment and follow-up. This system must be capable of responding to both the need for substance abuse and mental health services. The capacity must be developed to effectively respond to the needs of children with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders.
- IV. The subcommittee supports the work of the Implementing the System of Care committee as the group designated by Governor Carceiri to oversee the implementation of the system of care for children/adolescents in Rhode Island. This committee is chaired by Tom Izzo and Patricia Martinez. We recommend that members of the Services to Children Subcommittee attend meetings of this group and volunteer for participation on the Children's Cabinet Workgroups. The subcommittee will report back monthly to the Governor's Council on these activities.
- IV. The subcommittee strongly endorses that all efforts related to the design and implementation of a system of care involve representation by consumers of children's behavioral health services and parent/family participation. Meetings need to be scheduled at times that are convenient for consumers and must provide a forum in which community members are comfortable voicing their concerns and opinions.